

## Section 3

# OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

The Normandale Lake area has unique assets and characteristics that present both opportunities and challenges to its future growth and development. Some of the unique characteristics are described below. The remainder of this section summarizes the opportunities and challenges to development in the District over the next 20 years.

### ● A regional employment center

The District has one of the highest concentration of jobs in the Twin Cities metropolitan area and is the second most in tense employment district in Bloomington, after the Airport South District. It has the highest concentration of office employment in Bloomington.

### ● Planned and developed as a high quality, high density, mixed-use area

Since development began in the early 1980s, the office park on the west side of Normandale Boulevard has emphasized distinctive architectural design, high quality building materials and ample landscaping. Today the area enjoys a reputation for quality and amenities including easy access to adjacent parkland and supporting retail and service uses.

### ● Attractive to a wide range of development types

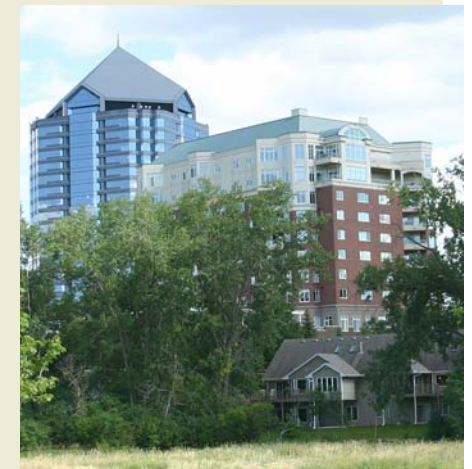
Direct access to the regional transportation system makes the District particularly attractive to commercial development, including hotels and offices. Likewise, the proximity to significant natural amenities has made the area one of the most desirable places to live in Bloomington. Located at the intersection of major highways, the District also serves as a gateway into Bloomington.

### ● Natural character and landscape

The Nine Mile Creek corridor passes through the west side of the District encompassing a system of water and wetlands that connects to neighboring communities and extends through Bloomington to the Minnesota River. While development on the west side of the District is integrated with the existing wetlands and woodlands, few of the original natural features were retained as the east side of the District developed in the 1960s and 70s. There are opportunities to reintroduce and enhance natural amenities in conjunction with redevelopment.



Since development began in the early 1980s, the office park on the west side of Normandale Boulevard has emphasized distinctive architectural design, high quality building materials and ample landscaping.





Adjacency to major regional roads, such as American Boulevard, TH 100 and I-494, enhances access for employment and commercial business.

### 3.1 Growth Estimates and Assumptions

The northwest area of Bloomington has been identified for intensive commercial/office development for decades. Land use and zoning designations since the City first adopted a Comprehensive Plan in the 1960s have provided for a concentration of high-intensity office, regional commercial, and mixed uses. Reasons for fostering intense development in this area include:

- **Maximizing the benefits of direct access and proximity to the regional transportation system**, including frontage on I-494 and TH 100 (Normandale Boulevard). Adjacency to major regional roads enhances access for employment and commercial business. It also contributes to the function of the area as a gateway into Bloomington.
- **Using the unique natural amenities of the area to attract high-quality development.** The presence of the Hyland-Bush-Anderson Lakes Regional Park Reserve makes the District and surrounding area attractive for Class-A office development as well as residential development.
- **Continuing Bloomington's commitment to accept a reasonable level of growth and plan wisely for it.** To accommodate growth, it is critical to balance development with appropriate investment in infrastructure improvements and traffic management. It also recognizes that complex traffic

congestion issues cannot be “solved” but can be “managed”. However, the City cannot do this alone; it requires cooperation of county and regional government as well as the private sector.

- **Concentrating development and employment can be served more effectively by public transit.** Given the large amount of employment in the District, Metro Transit has begun to view this area as a destination for transit riders and not simply an origin. They have begun to modify their bus routes to better accommodate employees coming to Bloomington in the morning and leaving in the afternoon. This will help reduce some of the peak hour traffic coming to and from the District.
- **Land values will continue to appreciate and foster demand for redevelopment of older structures and underutilized properties in the District.** The economics of redevelopment often require greater densities to make high-value development financially feasible.

**Table 3.1 Change in Employment (Jobs) by Use Type, 2007-2030**

Use	Existing		2030		Total Change
	Estimate	% of Total	Estimate	% of Total	
Office	8,220	88%	12,522	88.6%	+4,302
Retail	543	6%	1,068	7.5%	+525
Restaurant	95	1%	95	0.7%	NC
Hotel (Full Service)	357	4%	357	2.5%	NC
Hotel (Limited Service)	97	1%	97	0.7%	NC
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>9,312</b>		<b>14,139</b>		<b>+ 4,827</b>

Source: Bloomington Planning Division, 2007.

## Demographic Trends

Much of the area within the District is developed with commercial office, hotel, and retail uses. The District will continue to be Bloomington's second largest employment center and first in concentration of office employment. **Table 3.1**, above, shows a break down of projected future employment (jobs) in the District by type of use.

Estimates of future employment are based on both City development forecasts and employment factors derived from analysis of historic employment rate data as well as data from the Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE).

## Commercial Trend Findings

- The vast majority (88%) of employment in the District currently consists of office jobs.
- Over the next 20+ years office employment is forecast to increase by over 50%.
- Retail and restaurant employment is projected to increase, almost

doubling by 2030 (increase of 97%).

This reflects the assumption that the existing neighborhood shopping center with redevelop and expand to better utilize the property.

The District incorporates a small amount of residential development, mostly consisting of apartments, townhomes and condominiums. The District is forecast to account for about 10% of total growth in residential dwelling units in Bloomington by 2030. **Table 3.2**, next page, illustrates the existing breakdown of units in the District by type and the corresponding residential population estimate.

The vast majority (88%) of employment in the District currently consists of office jobs.



**Table 3.2 Change in Residential Units by Type, 2007-2030**

Unit Type	2007			2030		
	Number of Units	Persons/ Unit	Estimated Population	Number of Units	Persons/ Unit	Estimated Population
Townhome	67	1.95	131	67	2.10	141
Condo	48	1.62	78	48	1.67	80
Apartment	279	1.62	452	622*	1.67	1,038
Total	394	--	661	737	--	1,259

*Note: Persons/unit rates based on Metropolitan Council for 2007 and City estimates for 2030.*

*\* Number of apartments in 2030 based on assumed 282 units at 5100 W. 82nd and about a 30% increase in density of existing apartments at 5233 W. 82nd and 8200 Stanley when they redevelop.*

*Source: Bloomington Planning Division, 2007.*

### Residential Trend Findings

- The majority (70.8%) of residential dwellings in the District consist of apartment units; all built prior to 1970.
- The total number of residential dwelling units is estimated to increase by approximately 340 units over the next 20 years. This represents an increase of about 86%.
- Apartments will continue to be the most prevalent type of dwelling unit in the District, representing about 86% of total units in 2030.
- Census data indicate an increase in the number of persons per household, particularly for non-white households.
- With the projected increase in units and a slight increase in the ratio of persons per unit, the residential population of the District is estimated to increase by 598 people, or about 90%, by 2030.

New residential unit growth is associated with one proposed 282 unit apartment development approved by the City Council in May 2008 and some possible increase in density (30% assumed) if two of the older apartment buildings redevelop. It is also assumed that some of the existing older apartment buildings in the District will redevelop over the next 20 years.

When redevelopment occurs, it is likely that new residential buildings would be built to replace existing aging structures and could develop in a mixed use form. It is assumed that new apartments or condo developments would require an increase in density to make redevelopment financially feasible. Increases in residential density may require a traffic study to ensure adequate road capacity and access are available.

Many existing apartment buildings in the district are over 40 years old.





## Projected Development

Most of the existing vacant land in the District is located on the west side of Normandale Boulevard and is planned for office, hotel or residential development. Although there is very little undeveloped land on the east side of the District, it is expected that as land values increase, properties will redevelop more intensely and foster better utilization of land that is currently devoted to surface parking lots.

Estimated changes in land use and development intensity within the District are shown in **Table 3.3**, below. General findings include:

- Office development is the most prevalent land use in the District and this pattern will continue with the expected addition of over 1.3 million square feet of new office space over the next 20 years.
- Commercial/retail development is also forecast to more than double as a result of anticipated redevelopment of the neighborhood shopping center located on the east side of the District.

- Hotels currently occupy about 500,000 square feet of the District, mostly east of Normandale Boulevard. There are two potential sites for future hotel development in the District.

- Recent approval of 282 new rental apartments has signaled an emerging market for residential units with access to the District's amenities. This plan estimates an additional 60 units, however, the form of development may change, through property redevelopment, to allow a greater variety of housing styles and sizes and to integrate residential uses with neighborhood retail and commercial uses. Some increase in density would likely be required to make such redevelopment financially feasible.

**Table 3.3 Change in Development by Use Type, 2007 – 2030**

Land Use Type	Existing Development	Forecast 2030 Development	Change
Multi-Family Residential	394 DU	737 DU	+343 DU
Commercial/Retail	217,395 s.f.	427,338 s.f.	+209,943 s.f.
Hotel	474,241 s.f.	474,241 s.f.	NC
Office	2,490,688 s.f.	3,794,680 s.f.	+ 1,304,002 s.f.

Source: Bloomington Planning Division, 2007.



**Hotels currently occupy about 11 acres in the District.**



**Office development will remain the most prevalent land use in the District.**



**The existing shopping center is aging and will likely be rehabilitated over the next 20 years.**



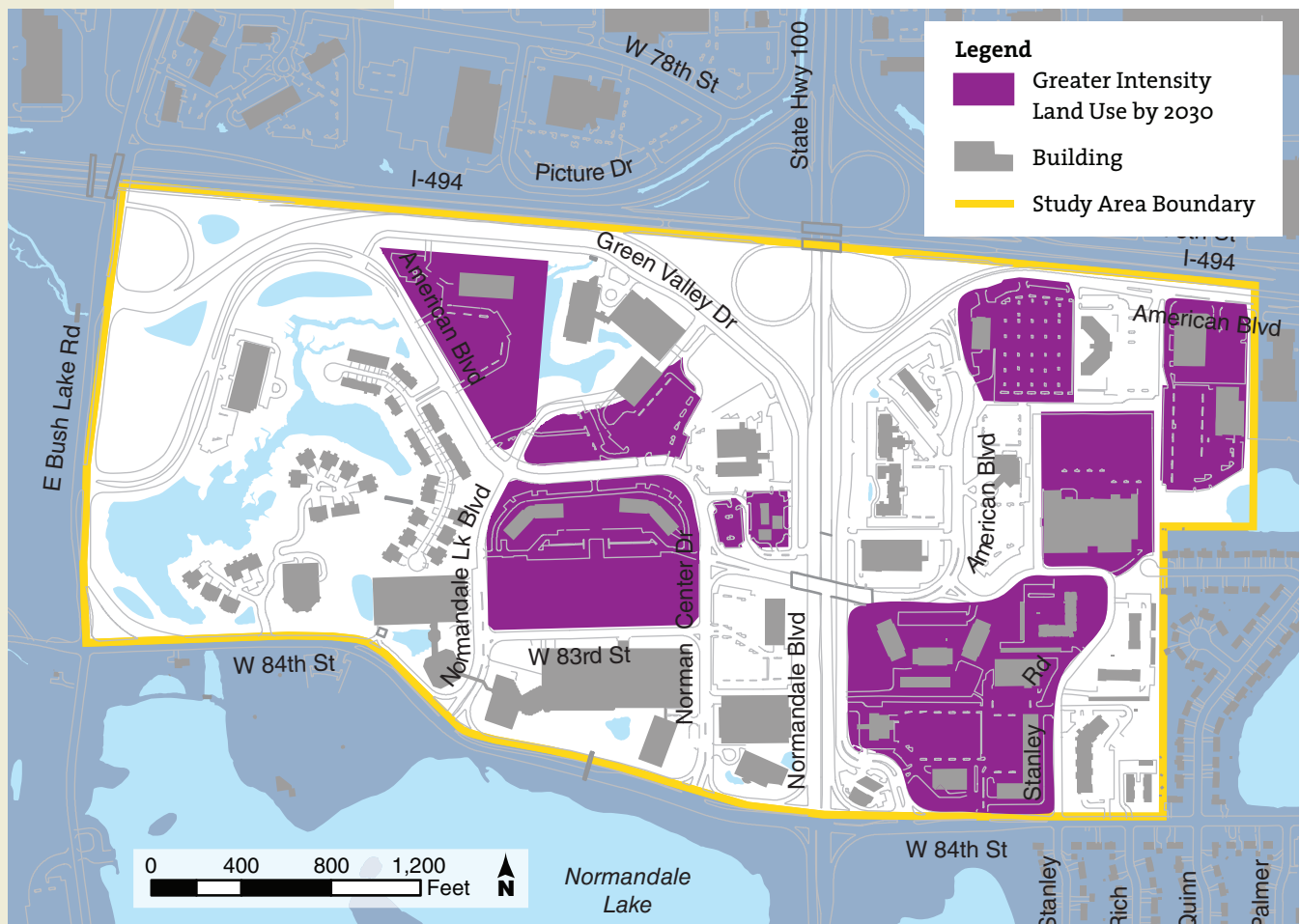
Older apartments on the east side of the District were developed in the 1960s and may be redeveloped over the next 20 years.

### 3.2 Redevelopment Potential

Many of the land uses existing within the boundaries of the District are expected to remain over the next 20 years. While the west side of the District contains a few undeveloped and vacant parcels, most redevelopment will occur on parcels located east of Normandale Boulevard. **Figure 3.1**, below, identifies parcels in the District anticipated for new development or intensification of development over the next 20 years.

Many of the structures on the east side of the District were developed in the 1960s and 70s and are approaching functional obsolescence. With a growing office and residential customer base, the existing neighborhood center has the potential to be redeveloped and reconfigured into a much more attractive center that better serves the adjacent office park and residential neighborhoods.

**Figure 3.1 Future Development and Redevelopment**



Source: Bloomington Planning Division.

## Redevelopment Opportunities

### Improve Utilization of Land

The east side of the District currently has a significant amount of land devoted to surface parking. When parcels redevelop there are opportunities to reduce the amount of surface pavement by building multi-story buildings (vertical mixed use) and incorporating parking in structures or underneath buildings.

### Incorporate Transit Facilities

Metro Transit has expressed a willingness to enhance transit service to this area. As redevelopment occurs, opportunities to incorporate enhanced transit facilities should be explored.

### Incorporate Natural Features

While the west side of the District includes a significant amount of green space and landscaping, these features are less prominent on the east side. As parcels redevelop there is opportunity to increase the amount of landscaped and pervious area in a manner that enhances individual properties and also extends a more “green” character throughout the east side. Redevelopment will also require compliance with current stormwater management regulations for on-site ponds. If well designed, ponds can become aesthetic focal points and provide natural habitat. Given the small parcel sizes on the east side of the District, consideration should be given to creating one regional pond to serve all development in that area.

### Improve Internal Circulation

The east side of the District, south of West 82nd Street, does not currently provide clear paths for moving between Stanley Avenue and the frontage road on Normandale Boulevard. Vehicles must traverse multiple parking lots to get through and there are no routes or paths to accommodate pedestrians or bicyclists. Redevelopment provides an opportunity to provide clear drive aisles or streets through this area that would enhance access to new developments for vehicles as well as pedestrians and bicyclists.

## Redevelopment Constraints

### Small Parcel Sizes

Several parcels on the east side of the District are quite small, making it more difficult to redevelop without consolidation. This will require significant cooperation between multiple property owners.

### Multiple Property Owners

Coordinating redevelopment will require working with several property owners who likely have individual development ideas and timing requirements. Some property owners will be ready to consider redevelopment much sooner than others and may not have the will or ability to “sit” on their property until adjacent properties are also ready for redevelopment.

### Lack of Internal Circulation

This is primarily a factor in the area bounded by West 82nd on the north,

The east side of the District currently has a significant amount of land devoted to surface parking.





Increased sewer capacity may be needed to accommodate future development.

Stanley Road on the east, West 84th St. on the south, and Normandale Boulevard on the west. As noted above, there are no public (or private) streets providing access through this area. There is an informal route created from parking lot drive aisles. Establishing a clear route through these parcels (whether public or private) would enhance access to the businesses and increase safety and customer convenience.

### Sewer Capacity

Recent sanitary sewer modeling indicates capacity constraints in the regional interceptor serving much of

the east side of the District. This sewer is owned and operated by Metropolitan Council Environmental Services (MCES) and also serves portions of Edina. Bloomington and Edina staff are currently working with MCES staff on a long-term solution to ensure adequate sewer capacity to serve planned growth in both cities. However, necessary improvements may not be implemented for several years. Until the sewer capacity is increased, new development that would result in an increase in sewer flow may be delayed.



The area currently experiences traffic congestion during afternoon peak hours.

## 3.3 Managing Traffic and Circulation

The area currently experiences traffic congestion during afternoon peak hours. Some of this is the result of the concentration of office employment in the District. There is also a significant amount of traffic originating outside the District that enters Bloomington on Normandale Boulevard/TH 100 on weekday afternoons. This traffic consists of a mix of Bloomington residents returning home after work as well as pass-through travelers. The traffic analysis conducted for this District Plan estimated levels of future traffic and identify road improvements needed to accommodate development through 2030. See *Appendix A*.

*Figures 3.2 and 3.3*, on the next page, illustrate existing (2002) and future (2030) traffic volumes in the District.

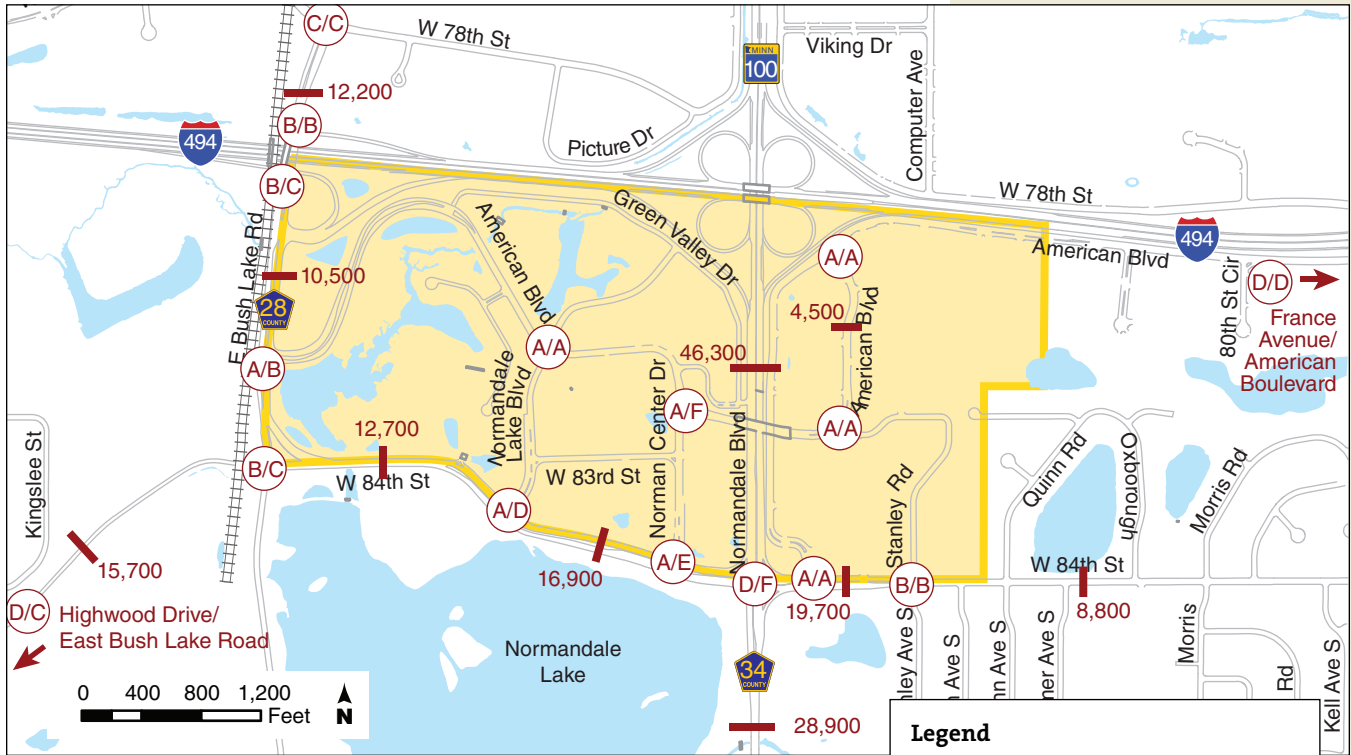
### Level of Service (LOS)

The traffic study analyzed the LOS at the intersection of Normandale Boulevard and West 84th Street. LOS is an indicator of how well an intersection operates and the average amount of time vehicles wait to get through. A LOS rank from A to D is considered acceptable by MnDOT, Hennepin County and the City in terms of a design goal.

Currently, the intersection of Normandale Boulevard and West 84th Street operates at a LOS F during weekday afternoon peak hours



**Figure 3.2 Existing (2002) Traffic Volumes**



Source: Bloomington Engineering Division.

**Figure 3.3 Future (2030) Traffic Volumes**



Source: Bloomington Engineering Division.



As employment increases there are opportunities to expand and enhance transit service to the District.

(approximately 4-6 p.m.). The poor operations at this intersection create backups that negatively affect the intersections at West 84th St. and Norman Center Drive and West 84th St. and Normandale Lake Boulevard, causing them to operate at LOS E and F, respectively. Road improvements are necessary to alleviate current traffic congestion and accommodate projected future development in the area as well as anticipated growth in background traffic over the next 20 years.

## Proposed Road Improvements

Based on analysis of existing and projected traffic volumes, several design concepts to increase intersection capacity were prepared for review and evaluation by the City. To achieve LOS D, improvements are also needed at other intersections and road segments in the District.

The preferred concept includes:

- Reconstruction of the intersection of Normandale Boulevard and West 84th St. to add lanes to increase traffic capacity;
- A future access from Bush Lake Road to west bound I-494 will have a significant beneficial impact on peak hour traffic congestion in the District.
- A pedestrian bridge over Normandale Boulevard (a required feature) to remove pedestrian crossings from the intersection;
- Additional signals and turn lanes on some internal streets in the District;

- Realignment of some internal streets in the District; and
- Some access restrictions including medians to restrict turning movements and a one-way restriction on Norman Center Drive.

A detailed description of the proposed road and traffic improvements is included in **Appendix A**. In addition, *Section 6: Implementation Plan*, describes the funding and phasing of these road improvements.

## Transit Enhancements

The District is currently served by three transit routes operated by Metro Transit. Service is primarily during weekday morning and afternoon rush hours. Transit access at other times is either not available or very limited.

As employment increases there is opportunity to expand and enhance transit service to the District. As previously stated, Metro Transit has indicated a willingness to consider the District as a trip destination during weekday rush hours, rather than simply a trip originator. Improved east-west transit service is also anticipated along American Boulevard to support more intensive development along this corridor.

The I-494 employment corridor through Bloomington and adjacent cities is one of the most logical and vital corridors in the Twin Cities for transit service improvements. A new transit way paralleling the I-494 employment corridor between the Hiawatha and Southwest LRT lines will be a vital and necessary component. Although completion of

such a transit way may be 20 to 40 years in the future, planning for it needs to start today.

Until a transit way can be created, limited bus stop services should be created along I-494 to facilitate suburb to suburb transit trips. The service would transport riders between stations or transfer points along the corridor where they would be able to transfer to/from local routes.

## Improving Connectivity

Good access in and out of the District is provided by the major roads in the area, including American Boulevard, West 84th Street, Normandale Boulevard, and East Bush Lake Road. Internal circulation within the District is also generally good, with the exception of the area between Normandale Boulevard and Stanley Avenue, south of West 82nd Street. As noted above, establishing a through connection in this area would enhance access to existing businesses, increase safety and improve circulation. Creating streets in this area, whether public or private, should be done in a manner that maximizes the development potential of adjacent parcels.

## Enhancing Pedestrian/Bicyclist Movement

Many of the major streets in the area are flanked by sidewalks and/or multi-purpose trails. However, the system of sidewalks and trails has gaps and some of the busy streets can be barriers to pedestrian and bicycle circulation. There is opportunity to expand the sidewalk and trail network in conjunction with road reconstruction and property redevelopment.

There are also opportunities and challenges to improve connections between the east and west sides of the District and to surrounding residential neighborhoods and Normandale Lake Park. A pedestrian bridge, required for operation of the 84th and Normandale intersection, will provide a safe means for pedestrians and bicyclists to cross Normandale Boulevard. However, access to the pedestrian bridge will need to be carefully designed. The existing American Boulevard bridge over Normandale Boulevard has sidewalks, but these are not wide enough to accommodate both pedestrians and bicyclists.

Many of the major streets in the area are flanked by sidewalks and/or multi-purpose trails.





Infrastructure capacity will need to be increased before new development can occur in some locations.

### 3.4 Coordinating Development with Infrastructure

Public infrastructure (i.e., roads, sewers) capacity must be adequate to accommodate development. In some cases infrastructure capacity will need to be increased before new development can occur. Generally, infrastructure upgrades are constructed when new development occurs or scheduled as part of the City's ongoing street and utility maintenance program.

The public infrastructure improvement needs anticipated to accommodate development in the District over the next 20 years include:

#### Road and Streetscape Improvements

A detailed description of the planned road infrastructure and streetscape enhancements and timing of implementation is included in *Section 5: Development Framework* and *Section 6: Implementation Plan*. Most of the proposed improvements will occur in two phases between 2008 and 2014. Other road and streetscape improvements will occur in conjunction with scheduled road reconstruction.

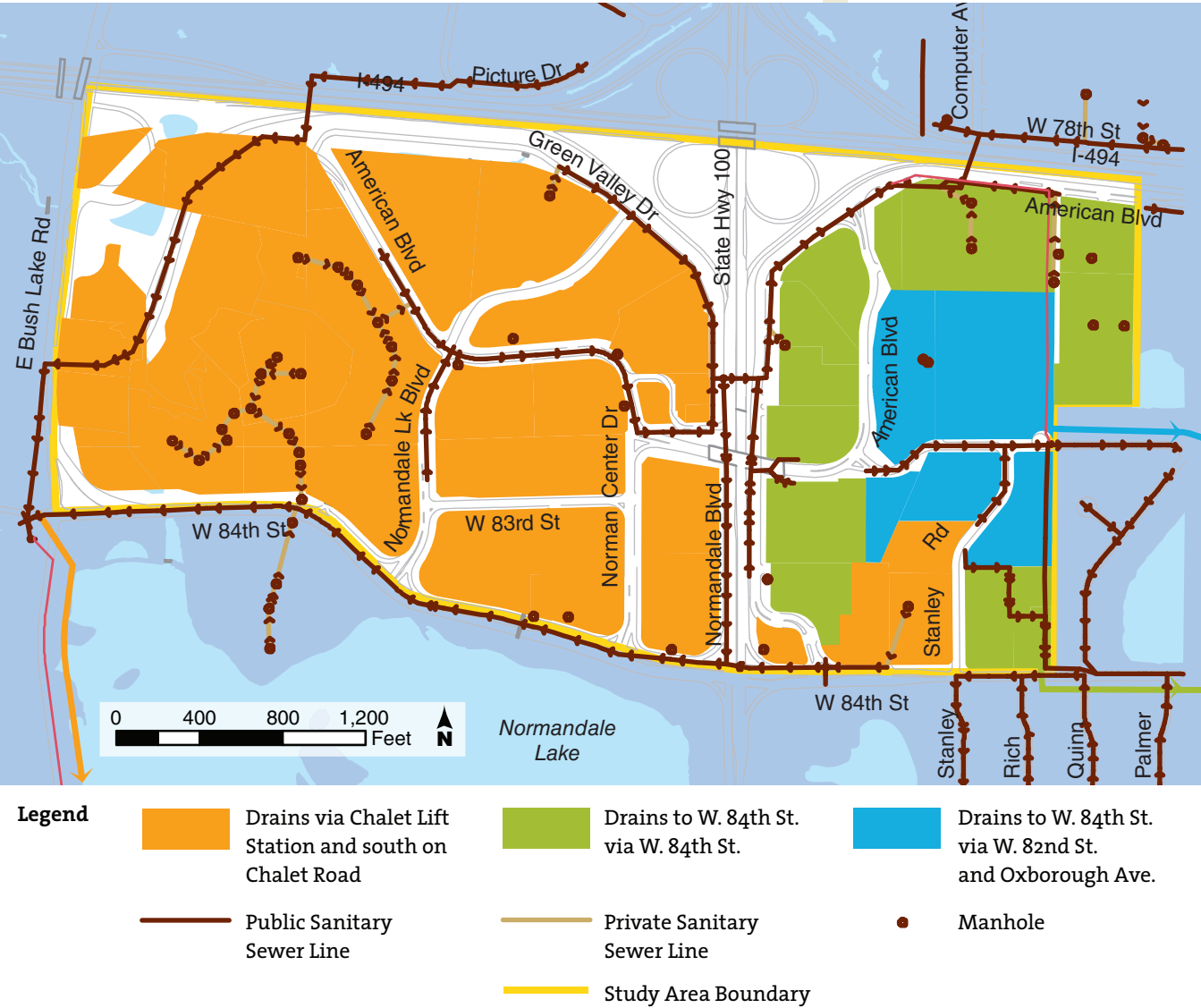
#### Sanitary Sewer Capacity Constraints

**Figure 3.4**, next page, illustrates the sanitary sewer drainage areas in the District. The sanitary sewer system serving the west side of District (shown in orange) has adequate capacity to serve planned development through 2030. A few parcels on the east side of Normandale Boulevard, including the shopping center, the bank, and the Holiday convenience store/gas station, are also served by that system. The remainder of the east side of the District is served by a regional sewer interceptor (3-BN-499) that is part of the Metropolitan Council Environmental Services (MCES) system, which also serves portions of Edina north of I-494. This interceptor is currently near capacity. Thus, additional development or redevelopment on parcels served by this interceptor requiring more sanitary sewer capacity will need to be closely evaluated to determine whether sufficient capacity is available.

Bloomington and Edina staff are currently working with MCES staff on a long-term solution to ensure adequate sanitary sewer capacity is available to serve planned growth in both cities.



Figure 3.4 Existing Sanitary Sewer and Drainage Areas



Source: Bloomington Utilities Division, 2008.



Substantial private investments have been made to beautify the District.



Intentional consideration of urban design is important to establish a clear identity and visual consistency.

### 3.5 Enhance District Character

Given the District's regional and local importance as an employment, recreation, and residential destination, and its location as a gateway to Bloomington, investments in the public and private realm are merited to enhance and maintain the physical and visual character of the area. Intentional urban design is important to establish a clear identity and visual consistency and to ensure that development is sensitive to the natural environment and enhances livability and property values.

Substantial private sector investments have been made in the area that enhance its visual character, particularly in the office developments west of Normandale Boulevard. Further enhancements, primarily to the public realm, should build on these efforts. There are also opportunities to extend the natural character, which is fairly prevalent on the west side of the District, to the area east of Normandale Boulevard in conjunction with redevelopment of older properties.

Enhancing the District's character will require commitment to the following efforts:

- **Enhance the design and function of public streets, sidewalks and paths:** This includes timely redesign, reconstruction, and maintenance of streets, sidewalks, and trails to provide for comfort, safety, and traffic flow while supporting surrounding land uses. It also includes establishing a more attractive environment for walking,

biking and driving.

- **Create green networks:** Green networks can include streets, sidewalks, trails or interconnected stormwater ponds. The emphasis is on use of plants and trees to enhance comfort and aesthetics, improve air quality, and moderate the impacts of weather. Green networks should reinforce primary routes to and between destinations in the area such as parks and open spaces, workplaces, residences, and commercial shopping areas.

- **Budget resources for construction and maintenance:** Adequate maintenance is crucial to create and sustain an attractive and distinctive identity for the District in the long term. Good design and careful selection of materials should ensure consideration of maintenance requirements. Even so, committing resources to routine and long-term maintenance is necessary to ensure streetscape elements retain their luster and ability to define a positive identity and image in the District.

A more detailed description and summary of proposed streetscape and urban design enhancements is provided in *Section 5: Development Framework* and an outline of tasks and phasing to implement these enhancements is included in *Section 6: Implementation Plan*.